

Leadership and Change in the Western Pacific: Essays Presented to Sir Raymond Firth on the Occasion of His 90th Birthday, edited by Richard Feinberg and Karen Ann Watson-Gegeo. London School of Economics Monographs on Social Anthropology, 66. London and Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Athlone Press, 1996. ISBN 0-485-19566-6, xiv + 416 pages, maps, figures, notes, bibliography, index. US\$90.

In many Pacific societies, one merely has to live long enough and possess some modicum of social grace to procure a leadership title of one sort or another. The same appears true of anthropology. This is the third festschrift yet to appear that commemorates the tutorage of Raymond Firth. The first (*Social Organization*, edited by Maurice Freedman) appeared some thirty years ago, about when Firth retired from the London School of Economics; the second (*Adaptation and Symbolism: Essays on Social Organization*, edited by K Watson-Gegeo and S L Seaton) was published in 1978, and three of its contributors honor Firth once again in this most recent collection.

This book originated at the 1991 meetings of the Association for Social Anthropology in Oceania, in a session convened to mark Firth's ninetieth birthday. In 1992, celebrants met again at the London School of Economics, with Firth himself in attendance. The editors remark the camaraderie of those participating in that event and declare that this was among the most rewarding experiences of their professional and (with a gush, one hopes, of

hyperbole) personal lives. Those interested might judge for themselves, as scenes from the conference appear in the 1993 video *Firth on Firth* (R Husmann and others).

Firth is best known for his hefty series of books about Tikopia, a tiny, isolated Polynesian outlier in the eastern Solomon Islands. Despite his 1947 Josiah Mason lectures on social organization and his forays into symbolism and peasant economy, Firth's theoretical and comparative wake in Pacific studies today washes rather shallow. Volume contributors, politely seeking those obligatory bibliographic connections, mostly cite his several descriptions of Tikopian chiefs (eg, an argument that chiefs endure in Tikopia having taken on new political functions, including those of symbolizing their community now encapsulated in a larger state). The theoretical interlocutor throughout much of the book is George Marcus, whose 1989 analysis of the "kingly" versus "populist" character of Polynesian chiefs (in A Howard and R Borofsky, *Developments in Polynesian Ethnology*) stimulated a variety of responses.

Paying Firth back in his own coin, contributors offer careful ethnographies of leadership in ten Pacific societies. Stephen Boggs and David Gegeo remark the "exquisite detail" of Firth's work, and the collection in this regard is a befitting legacy. Karen Watson-Gegeo and Richard Feinberg, by way of introduction, offer a close review of the literature on typologies and theories of leadership. Feinberg next describes chiefs on Anuta, including his own status as a pretender to the throne. Niko Besnier discusses the

problems of leaders on Nukulaelae who have to work around a strong egalitarian ethic despite the fact that people also profess to long for an authoritarian political structure. Barbara Lüem follows recent attempts to revive Nanumaga's traditional chiefly system. Bradd Shore analyzes the ambiguities of chiefly power in Sāmoa, and the play of political satire by which people deal psychodynamically with hierarchy. "Backstage shenanigans" are the comic underside of Samoan political authority. Torben Monberg describes the disappearance of chiefs on Bellona and the emergence of new bases of stratification, especially education. Alan Howard describes a similar decline of Rotuman chiefs and the rise of a new elite, following the career of onetime Member of Parliament Wilson Inia. Steven Hooper is concerned to explain the workings of the chiefly system in Lau (Eastern Fiji) and the absence, therein, of "commoners." Boggs and Gegeo, in a piece more historical than ethnographic, describe leadership among Solomon Island migrant laborers in late-nineteenth-century Queensland and then leadership of subsequent sociopolitical movements, such as Maasina Rule, back in the Solomons. Gegeo and Watson-Gegeo follow the checkered careers of two Kwara'ae leaders, in the context of traditional and contemporary expectations about power and hierarchy on Malaita. Nancy Lutkehaus analyzes increasingly tense relations between chiefs, commoners, and the Papua New Guinea state on Manam Island. And Harvey Whitehouse describes the devious strategies of a cargo cult prophet and

his impresario to acquire power and position in East New Britain.

William Shack, from an older generation of Firthian students, offers a number of rather vapid comparisons with Africa as a volume epilogue. It is telling that, following his reading of the collection, Shack concluded, "Party politics and the social and political allegiances thereby generated find no representation . . . in the Western Pacific as sketched in these essays" (404). This is, to some degree, a misreading on Shack's part but it is true that the attention of most volume contributors focuses on leadership at the village rather than the national or international level of party politics, labor unions, women's organizations, regional organizations, incoming religions, and so forth. Were one to boil the book down to its common denominators, one would discover a few familiar conclusions. The anthropological categories of chief and big-man, and acquired versus achieved status, are too simple. And local leaders around the Pacific are having a tough time leading.

No one remarks what during the conference must have been a spooky appellational juxtaposition of Sir Raymond with Tui Anuta and Tui Udu and the Ariki Tafua—the coming together, for a few days there at the London School of Economics, of two titular systems of hierarchy. I trust that the backstage shenanigans were entertaining.

LAMONT LINDSTROM
University of Tulsa

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